Introduction

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The contibutions collected in this volume find themselves at the crossroads of two blooming fields of research: Late Antiquity and ancient rhetoric. Indeed, as a result of the cultural and linguistic turns in Humanities in general, and Classics and Ancient History in particular, scholars have not only opened up a range of texts that were previously undervalued and understudied, they have also developed a variegated range of interpretative strategies to analyse these texts. The current volume illustrates both these projects and achievements: studying well-known texts such as Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* alongside texts that were, for a long time, mostly neglected or considered to be of lesser quality, such as Methodius' *Symposium*, its various contributions also present a rich variety of interpretative models. In the following pages, I offer a survey of the individual chapters, followed by a brief discussion of the threads connecting them.

In the first chapter, Lorenzo Miletti examines the reasons behind Aelius Aristides' (117–181) extraordinary popularity in Late Antiquity. A first reason is Aristides' mysticism and inspiration by a single God, understandable to both pagan and Christian readers in Late Antiquity. Secondly, Miletti shows that Aristides' public exposure of himself and his ill health was, in many cases, rhetorically apt to the performative context of the Asclepieion of Pergamon, where the orator could thus present himself as an exemplary patient to fellow sufferers. As a result, ancient audiences and authors, far from interpreting the prominent place of Aristides' person and illness in his speeches as a sign of an egocentric, neurotic nature, as many scholars in the past couple of centuries have done, found it acceptable and even admirable. A third reason for Aristides' popularity in Late Antiquity is his nuanced position towards Plato: whilst Aristides conquers the hearts of rhetoricians such as Themistius and Synesius by criticizing Plato's stance on rhetoric, he also manages to keep Platonists such as Porphyry on board by amply quoting Plato. Aristides could thus function as a mediator between rhetoricians and philosophers in Late Antiquity. Fourth, Aristides both surpasses Isocrates by treating his topics in Demosthenic style, and updates him to the new reality of a Greek world dominated by Rome. Last but not least, Aristides also became a model of rhetorical practice and theory through several types of encomiastic speeches, through his Atticism and style, and through his pious and moderate ethical outlook. All in all, Aristides thus manages to tap into themes and discourses such as monotheism, Greek identity

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under Roman dominion, and the relation between rhetoric and philosophy, that were, in Late Antiquity, as relevant as ever.

The second chapter, by Ryan C. Fowler, presents a study of the use of the term and idea of *sophrosyne* in the *Symposium* of Methodius of Olympus (d. c. 311). As Fowler demonstrates, Methodius defends (his own, Christian interpretation of) Plato against the encratites by arguing that *sophrosyne* is not so much about chastity in the sense of absolute restraint of the body, but about understanding the form of "chastity" proper to oneself—n some cases virginity, in others well-practiced marriage and procreation or even remarriage—, and to harmonize one's impulses accordingly. In line with the topic of the volume, rhetoric is shown to play a key role in developing Methodius' view on *sophrosyne*: by developing the definition of *sophrosyne* progressively through the eleven main speeches included in the dialogue, Methodius manages to show the superiority of his own definition over that of his encratist opponents.

In the following chapter, Guadalupe Lopetegui Semperena discusses two Latin apologetics: Arnobius' *Adversus nationes* and Firmicus Maternus' *De errore profanarum religionum*. As both authors were converts to Christianity and composed (in the case of Arnobius, at least the final version of) their apologetics after the Edict of Milan, scholars have often associated both texts under the common denominator of "post-Constantinian apologetics". Yet, whilst acknowledging shared characteristics, Lopetegui Semperena demonstrates how the different argumentative aims, target audiences, and political-ideological contexts brought about by the more than thirty years that separate both works, lead Arnobius and Maternus to adopt substantially different rhetorical strategies: whereas Arnobius, especially in his first book, uses induction and deduction in an almost dialectial set-up in order to refute the accusation that Christianity caused the evils and confusion experienced by his late-third and early-fourth century contemporaries, Maternus, writing under Constantius and Constance and addressing the emperors alongside a more general readership, produces something that resembles a sermon, full of Biblical references, in order to exhort these readers to ban any public, respectively personal, pagan cults. These differences illustrate not just the varying outlook of Arnobius and Maternus, but also testify to the continuing pragmatism of rhetoric in Late Antiquity: as opposed to what has sometimes been suggested, rhetoric continued to be a creative and powerful speech act.

In chapter four, José Torres Guerra examines Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*. Building on recent research on the use of images in that text, Torres Guerra zooms in on the relation between word and image in Eusebius' account of the Council of Nicaea. After a discussion of the various senses of the word "image"—which includes material images as well as symbols and signs—he

demonstrates that Eusebius (c. 260–340), whilst discussing the difficulty of matching images with words, manages to create a verbal image of Constantine's entry at the Council, which visually symbolizes the unity and harmony of the Church, and turns it into an image of the Kingdom of God. In this way, Eusebius manages to paint with words just like the emperor created or inspired material images and arranged for stark visual appearances. All these images, in turn, stimulate the desire "to divine affection by the imitation of noble deeds" (*Life of Constantine* 1.10.2–3, quoted on p. xx).

The next chapter is by the editor of the volume, Alberto Quiroga Puertas, and analyses rhetorical strategies in Julian's *Caesars*. As Quiroga Puertas demonstrates, Julian (d. 363) brilliantly combines different literary forms in such a way as to support his religious, philosophical and political programme. More particularly, the opening scene, which describes an assembly of the gods, is shown to be permeated by Neoplatonic symbolism. In order to do so, Julian not only draws attention to the ecphrastic nature of the scene, but also reflects on the impossibility of describing the sublunar realm of divinity with human words. The second part of the text, by contrast, subverts the rules of the *basilikos logos* in a description of Roman emperors, culminating with Julian himself as a protégé of Mithras. This conscious subversion of literary norms allows Julian as it were to signal the extraordinary nature of his political and religious agenda. By combining two very different literary codes in a single text, moreover, he manages to underline the difference between the divine and the human realms—even in the case of emperors who, in contemporary presentations, were often depicted as an image of the gods.

Chapter six focuses on Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329–390) as a pivotal figure in adopting and adapting Atticist rhetoric on Asianism to a Christian context. As Byron MacDougall demonstrates, Gregory ingeniously applies Dionysius of Halicarnassus' negative depiction of the spread of Asianism to the travels of George of Cappadocia, one of Gregory's main Arian contemporary opponents. By doing so, he manages to criticize not only George of Cappadocia's personality, but also essentialist Arian theories of language. At the same time, Gregory's use of Dionysius assimilates the role of Athanasius with that of Rome, as a law-giver restoring order. Gregory's re-use of classical rhetoric thus integrates linguistic, philosophical and religious controversies, as well as contemporary political reality. And Gregory was not the end of the story: Theodoret of Cyrus, in turn, turned Gregory's rhetoric against George of Cappadocia against one of the main heresiological leaders of his own days, Nestorius of Antioch.

Leonardo Lugaresi continues the volume with a chapter that zooms in on the connection between John Chrysostom's polemic against theatres on the one

hand, and the theatrical rhetoric he uses to this end, on the other. Introducing the concepts of the "exterior" versus the "interior" stage, Lugaresi shows how John (c. 349–407) emphasizes over and over again that theatrical performances on the exterior stage (e.g., in the theatre), far from being innocent spectacles from which the spectator can walk away unharmed, are interiorized and performed again on the interior stage of the spectator's mind and soul, thus turning him away from virtue. In order to break the spell of theatre, John *rhetorizes* the exterior stage: by discussing and analyzing theatre in his speeches, performed outside of the chronotope of the theatre, John shows the ontological and ethical discrepancy between appearance and truth which the theatre implies. John thus diplays a great "semiological competence (…): he is aware that the significance of a message is closely related to the medium through which it is transmitted and to the communicative situation within which it takes place" (p. xx).

Chapter eight, by Javier Campos Daroca, is concerned with Eunapius' *Lives of the Sophists*. If recent scholarship has mostly read these *Lives* as a series of variants of the ideal life—and thus, in a sense, a pagan version of Christian collective biographies—, Campos Daroca makes a case for giving more attention to individual details and differences in Eunapius' *Lives*. In order to do so, he explores the references to Socrates in Eunapius' descriptions of the lives of various philosophers. Whilst Eunapius (c. 346) always emphasizes the importance of the link between rhetoric and philosophy, i.e. style of speech and philosophical ethos, the implementation of the latter greatly differs across the *Lives*. Chrysanthius, for example, is said to embody the Platonic Socrates through his unaffected and simple character, thus offering an example of an ethical, i.e. more contemplative, kind of life. Other philosophers, such as Alypius and Sopatros, by contrast, follow Socrates' "political" example in leading an active life in which they try to influence policies and rulers. Interestingly, as Campos Daroca points out, Eunapius also offers a metabiographical discourse that emphasizes the importance of narrating both kinds of philosophical life appropriately by setting himself apart earlier biographers, be they well-known authors of collective biographies such as Plutarch, or subjects included in Eunapius' *Lives* who also wrote other philosophers' lives. In this way, Eunapius manages, for example, to set his own, rather historiographical biography of Alypius against Iamblichus' *Life of Alypius*, which, according to Eunapius, failed to explain Alypius' various deeds and the causal relationship between them as it focused too much on ethics, and too little on politics.

The last chapter, finally, deals with Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* (fifth century). In it, Laura Miguélez-Cavero describes the *ekphrasis* of the necklace which Aphrodite, in disguise, gives to her daughter Harmonia, so as to make her agree to

marry Cadmus. Miguélez-Cavero not only discusses the details of the *ekphrastic* technique, but also confronts Nonnus' description with contemporary jewellery as well as with literary precedents, and links it with the rest of the *Dionysiaca*. In this way, she shows the interpretative work that is necessary in order to fully understand the *ekphrasis*, which already required a high degree of paideia in Late Antiquity, and which is even harder for us than for Nonnus' contemporary readers.

Overall, then, the contents of this volume span a rich variety of topics: its contributions deal with texts from the second to the fifth centuries A.D., with Christian as well as pagan authors who wrote mostly in Greek, but also in Latin, and with genres as diverse as the philosophical dialogue and epic poetry. Nevertheless, all the chapters contained in the volume, irrespective of their topic and chosen interpretative methodologies, are connected to each other by one or more common threads, which allow for three important conclusions to be drawn from the volume as a whole.

First, the contributions to this volume individually and collectively confirm what has repeatedly been argued in the past years, viz. that rhetoric remained fully alive in Late Antiquity: not only did rhetoric continue to be actively practised and publicly performed, it was also creatively adapted to ever changing religious and political circumstances. Lopetegui, for example, clearly demonstrates how different aims, contexts and target audiences lead Arnobius and Maternus to choose different rhetorical arguments and strategies. Again, Fowler illustrates how even in a philosophical dialogue, the clever use of rhetoric allows the author to score his point against philosophical opponents. And MacDougall shows how classical rhetorical themes and topoi were thus used and reused to great effect in ever changing religious debates.

A second point that comes to the fore in many of the contributions to this volume is the prominence of metatexts. This suggests that late antique authors, independently of the genre in which they were writing, engaged in rhetoric and literature *consciously*: they not only used rhetoric in order to reach their goals, they also reflected on their own practices, as well as on their place within the literary tradition. While Torres Guerra, for example, emphasizes Eusebius' explicit reflections on the possibilities and difficulties of describing images with words, Miguélez-Cavero analyses how Nonnus' ecphrasis of Harmonia's necklace allows the author to place himself in a long and rich literary tradition. On a less explicit level, Lugaresi highlights John Chrysostom's semiological competence, and Quiroga Puertas shows how Julian's ingenious deployment and combination of literary forms as it were embodies the text's message. In line with this, several of the late antique authors covered in this volume also actively think about language: as MacDougall shows, Gregory of Nazianzus, for

example, criticizes not only the personality of George of Cappadocia, but also the theories of language held by his Arian supporters.

Finally, the contributions contained in this volume also underline the importance of taking rhetoric into account if we are to come to a correct interpretation of the texts studied here. Indeed, as Miletti shows, if we are to avoid psychoanalytical verdicts on Aelius Aristides' public self-exposure as a sufferer, we should take into account the performative context, in Pergamon's Asclepieion, of his rhetoric. Likewise, Campos Daroca demonstrates that careful attention not just for the presence of classical examples, but for their precise rhetorical elaboration at different points in the text, forces us to rethink the function of Eunapius' *Lives*, as this work thus turns out to have more attention for differences between individual philosophers and sophists than has sometimes been suggested in the model that presents the work as a pagan version of Christian collective biographies.

Taken together, then, the contributions assembled here by Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas not only discuss a rich palette of authors, topics and interpretative strategies, they also make some crucial points about late antique rhetoric—points that will be of interest to scholars of Late Antiquity as well as ancient rhetoric and beyond.